

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH
ORCHESTRAL CONCERT

SEASON 1965-66

Third Concert

REID ORCHESTRA

Leader: DR. JOHN FAIRBAIRN

Conductor: SIDNEY NEWMAN

Solo Violin:
MAUREEN SMITH

REID SCHOOL OF MUSIC
THURSDAY, 18TH NOVEMBER, 1965
AT 7.30 P.M.

PROGRAMME TWO SHILLINGS

JEAN SIBELIUS
8th DECEMBER, 1865—20th SEPTEMBER, 1957

PROGRAMME

I SYMPHONY No. 3 IN C

Sibelius

Allegro moderato
Andantino con moto quasi allegretto
Allegro

(Composed 1905-7; dedicated to Granville Bantock).

The third symphony is markedly more classical in feeling than its predecessors, more compact in structure and in its dimensions, more restrained and economic in its scoring. A brief programme note affords no scope either for an illuminative analytical study or for a proper consideration of the relationship of this to Sibelius' other symphonies. For these the reader may be referred to Cecil Gray's "Sibelius" (1931), Gerald Abraham in the symposium on Sibelius (in the "Music of the Masters" series published by Lindsay Drummond, Ltd.), and Tovey's "Essays in Musical Analysis" (Vol. II).

The formal clarity of the first movement is striking. None the less, despite the direct simplicity of the opening theme, the primary material proves to be a complex of several distinct melodic themes, and the secondary material, which begins with an extensive violoncello melody in B minor, proves in the course of the development to be very subtly related to the first theme. The vivacity and action of the movement springs, however, mainly from the rapid ostinato motive of the strings which streams as a *moto perpetuo* throughout the latter part of the exposition and throughout the whole development. At the conclusion there emerges a chorale-like theme of simple grandeur inspired by the first theme.

The middle movement (in G sharp minor) is occupied for the most part with the continuing restatement in varied colouring and in different keys of one unchanging melody, but before the final statement is reached this simple formal design momentarily and quite unexpectedly dissolves into a realm of scherzoso fantasy.

The last movement throws down in quick succession scattered scraps of vivacious melodic themes, with a certain reluctance to give full rein to the rhythmic impetus inherent in them, and throughout the first half of this scherzo-like finale the tempo is subject to an

ebb and flow of energy. At length there emerges on the violas in chorus a march-like theme (already foreshadowed by the horns) which throughout the rest of the movement is built up in ever grander proportions to yield a peroration of truly noble breadth and power.

2. VIOLIN CONCERTO IN E minor (op. 64) - - *Mendelssohn*

Allegro molto appassionato—
Andante—Allegretto non troppo—
Allegro molto vivace

The only lasting embarrassment which this masterpiece has had to endure has been that of its own exceptional popularity. One knows the work, or thinks one knows it, without ever having really looked into the work under the stimulus of a first impact. Like Tovey one "envies the enjoyment of anyone who should hear the Mendelssohn Concerto for the first time and find that, like Hamlet, it is full of quotations." Call Mendelssohn a Romantic Classicist or what you will, there is here as bold and individual an invention in design as there is freshness of inspiration in melodic and thematic content.

It is a comparatively modern convention to refrain from applauding in between the movements of all extended works, but the necessity for such a convention was established by this concerto in 1844—for the simple reason that "there is no in between!"

INTERVAL

3. SYMPHONY No. 4 (Op. 63) - - - - *Sibelius*

Tempo molto moderato quasi adagio
Allegro molto vivace—Doppio più lento
Tempo largo
Allegro

Remarkable as is Sibelius' Third Symphony for its concision, economy of means, clarity of scoring, yet none of these, nor its bright optimism, could prepare Sibelius' followers nor audiences either in Finland or in the world at large for the extraordinary condensation of musical thought, the novel concepts of orchestration or the psychological outlook of the Fourth Symphony which appeared in April 1911. Sibelius himself knew that it must prove a formidable challenge at a time when the musical world was so much intoxicated by the latest lavish luxuries of sound which Strauss and Mahler poured out. It was a conscious protest. He himself proclaimed it as such in writing to Rosa Newmarch—"Nothing, absolutely nothing of the circus about it!" he added.

However, the really important point about this symphony is not its "protest" in 1911, but the guarantee it carried for Sibelius' personal development as a symphonist, his power to expand from condensed thought to broad design within one work as in the ultimately jubilant Fifth Symphony, or to concentrate complexity of thought as in the Seventh Symphony. Not only so, but much of the concentrated and deeply serious symphonic thought of the middle of this century stems ultimately from the bid made by this most impressive work of Sibelius. Yet never again did he proffer anything quite so succinct, so disruptive of the orchestral ensemble into its contrasted elements of strings, woodwind and brass, nor so challenging to the habits of ear and mind with regard both to formal design and to psychological developments.

One is to know from the broad span of the main solo 'cello melody near the outset, and from the tonal scheme of the whole that it is a Symphony in A—"minor" in its main stance of opening and conclusion, but "major" in the eventual repose of its first movement and in the predominant jubilation of its finale up to the sombre mood of its concluding phase. But this is to be wise after the event, and what one hears at the outset is a deep resonant "tritone motive"—ambiguously sounding like a Lydian (sharp fourth) to a major scale until it proves it is a sharp sixth to a Dorian minor scale (which was to have so telling an effect in the pine forests of "Tapiola"). The happy scherzo movement suggests a normal design—but well on in its course it flows suddenly into a sobered half-speed triple measure fraught with the strongest, almost painful stresses with recurring diminished fifths, tapering at the last suddenly to the timpani's vanishing point. The Largo has its warmth of passionate melody but this only emerges from the transparencies of quiet contemplation and unpredictable ruminations. Only the finale brings a bigger sweep of design and an impetus that runs unthwarted throughout until colours are suddenly faded away into a monochrome of minor key at the last.

S.T.M.N.